Communist propaganda has succeeded in persuading many persons in the West that the Russian people have never enjoyed liberty or yearned for individual freedom, so that the regime the Soviets imposed upon them is in accord with their historical tradition and national character. The truth is that the liberation movement in Russia looks back at a long and dramatic history and has produced more thinkers and martyrs than have such movements in any other country. The movement had its ups and downs, but the Tsarist regime never succeeded in strangling the aspiration of Russia's people for freedom. Even after the Communist coup and the dispersion of the Constituent Assembly, they continued freedom's desperate struggle.

Only the future will show whether the ruthless extermination of opponents, the systematic indoctrination of new generations, and the terroristic methods of dictatorship have made the people forget their yearning for freedom and the relative liberty that existed in old Russia. Even if the Communists accomplish their objective, however, the contention that freedom is not valued by the Russian people, and that these people are preconditioned to serfdom by all their history, rests on insufficient knowledge of the country and its history.

The origin of the Soviet regime in Russia casts light on the place of Communism in the spectrum of liberal ideas. Certainly it cannot be considered the extreme, most uncompromising, expression of liberal philosophy. Its agreement with some liberal slogans is purely accidental and is determined by expediency. Fundamentally, its moral and philosophical premises and those of liberalism are mutually exclusive.

Let us picture a kind of graph of various political philosophies, the classifications to be based on the attitude of each toward the rights of the individual and its respect for human dignity and freedom. It will be on a one-dimensional scale, going from the extreme to moderate left and then from the moderate to the extreme right. At the extreme left would come the ideologies defending the absolute supremacy of the individual against the state or any other collective organization claiming to limit his rights. Next would come ideological systems protecting the rights and freedoms of the individual, but paying increased attention to the possibility of a conflict between his rights and the rights of other individuals and the community. Further, closer to the center, would be ranged ideologies preoccupied with a proper balance between the interests and rights of the community and those of individuals. These would be followed by theories dominated by the idea of the community, with the individual in a subordinate role, dependent on the collective. At the end of the array would come ideologies of a totalitarian state—the extreme expression of Fascism and Communism.